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VADE MECUM, VOLVENTIBUS ANNIS

THE MAYANS
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**SAN ANTONIO,
TEXAS**

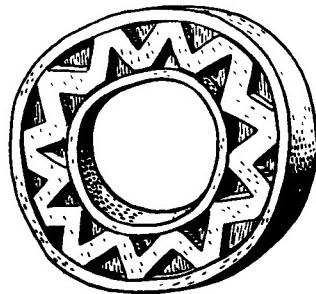
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PHILOSOPHY SERIES ONE

6th and 7th Degrees



THE SEARCH FOR RELIGION

Beloved Companion:

The Philosophers of the ages may be said to have devoted their lives to the search for the all perfect religion. Many have believed they found it. Succeeding ages usually found flaws in each system of philosophy and often a whole philosophy was abandoned even though it contained much wisdom.

The ancient Mayans, though possessing high artistic ability, seldom, in drawing a circle, drew it perfectly. This has led some archaeologists to believe that the Maya did not know how to draw a perfect circle. Actually, to the Maya, the circle was a holy symbol, meaning Perfection. Knowing man's imperfections they always drew the circle-symbol imperfectly, considering it near sacrilege to draw it as perfect as they could.

Man-made circles, they felt, illustrated the imperfections of all philosophies that man has or ever will erect. Hence, in all the ancient carvings existing in the old temples still standing in Mayaland, in the ancient shards and fragments and pottery, when the circle appears it is drawn only crudely circular, or the body of a serpent in circular position is used. The very few exceptions to this that have been found occur only on temples or articles for the highest religious usages.

We who live in the present mechanistic era, find this idea a trifle difficult to grasp. We use the circle constantly and for the most mundane purposes. Few things we enjoy today would be possible for us were it not for our utilitarian use of the circle - as, for instance, in our use of the wheel. The wheel was

never used by the Mayans, to use the circle for such purpose, in the dust, was unthinkable.

Yet, without wheels all our transportation, from horse and buggy to the motor car and streamlined train would be impossible. Scarcely a machine could be made that did not involve the use of wheels in itself or in its making. Our fabrics, our food, our coal, metal, everything we need or use is delivered to us or manufactured through the use of the wheel principle. Further, in order that our machines be as perfect as possible we have constantly sought to perfect the circle.

Measurements to one hundred thousandths of an inch are today fairly common in industry. And this seeking for perfection has paid our civilization rich dividends in better products, greater ease, more comfort.

Though the two philosophies seem opposed, in reality they need not be. The circle-symbol is still a holy one. The search for perfection is as worthy as ever. Nothing would be gained by throwing away the old symbol or the wisdom it illustrated, for that wisdom is still true. Only God is perfect, and the greater the engineer the quicker he will acknowledge it. Nor would his acknowledgment make it wise to throw away all present-day mechanical contrivances that make mundane use of the wheel or circle.

Our interest in this series is in the philosophies of all ages, both past and present. The word itself is ancient Greek, from Philos, meaning love, plus Sophia, meaning wisdom. A philosopher then, is merely a lover of wisdom. You have demonstrated your love of wisdom through these Mayan Degrees which you so devotedly and loyally follow. You have therefore passed the tests and are adjudged worthy of the title Mayan Philosopher and to continue your studies in these Higher Degrees.

The past several lessons bring you a simplified and basic philosophy based on the beliefs of the Modern Mayan Order. In the future we shall examine many philosophies. They will be brought to you in Mayan lessons, but this does not mean that our Order accepts them in full, nor that you should; - we agree with the ancient ones who said, "Nothing created by man is perfect." But man constantly seeks perfection and his searches and researches, his discoveries and his conclusions are wisdoms worthy of the careful scrutiny of other philosophers.

From such material you can, as a philosopher, build your own philosophy. From all the world's thinking through all the ages, you can create your own ideas and thinking wisely, melt and weld together riches of wisdom perhaps as great, perhaps even greater than the recorded philosophies of the past. In any case, the instructor of your class has faith that you will continue to gain richly in Philo-Sophia, the Love of Wisdom.

The love of wisdom leads surely to the search for it, hence prepare to receive in lessons still to come knowledge of elements, powers, causes and laws. In the present lecture we are to consider certain aspects of man's search for religion. It has nothing to do with sects or creeds, but deals really with ontology, that philosophical doctrine that man has within himself, an immediate and

certain knowledge of God and that this knowledge is the foundation and guarantee of all his knowledge.



It is generally accepted that religion is the hope of the individual and of the race, and most of us feel in our hearts that this is true. The question is, how is one to avail himself of religion and its benefits with some assurance that he is getting the real Truth. One who wants it must read widely and think much to feel satisfied within himself that his philosophy will answer all questions. Such Truth should not fear questionings, but face them and answer them satisfactorily. It is not religion to smother doubts with untrue statements, saying, "It is irreligious to question." It is the highest form of religion to seek answers, to KNOW; thus is Faith made sure and strong and honest.

One day the writer heard a young man say of a certain old lady that "she had all kinds of religion." All kinds is the right religion to have, but it is the idea that there are different kinds that makes the trouble.

Joseph Smith, a New York farm boy, was so disturbed over the claims and counter claims of the various denominational revivalists who came to the community, each telling the people his way was right and all others were wrong, that he asked God to tell him which denomination to join. He claimed that an angel told him not to join any of them, as they were hopelessly divided and all wrong. Having had it revealed to him that there were too many kinds of churches, Smith proceeded to try to solve the problem by starting another church.

That is what people have been doing for centuries, with the result that we have dozens of churches and denominations and hundreds of religious viewpoints, most of them built around one special point of belief like baptism, physical healing, sanctification, etc. The tendency is to emphasize these special points of belief and neglect or soft-pedal the remainder of divine truth.

There also exist many religions other than the Christian religion, most of them older than it is. Some of these are great and powerful while others are small and obscure, but they all tend to herd a section of the world's population off into a corner and separate it religiously from the rest.

Choosing among these countless types of religious faith is indeed a perplexing responsibility and an exacting task. No wonder some people have to take a long time at it, some even taking so long that they never get it done because they could not make up their minds. No wonder, either, that others lose their way in the confusion of witnessing tongues.

It is to the credit of anyone that he tries to be conscientious about so important a matter, and invests time and careful thought in the effort to arrive at a right conclusion. It is the least an honest mind can do.

But what is the right conclusion? One meets people of many and widely different viewpoints, each claiming that his creed is the only true one and that his organization alone can guarantee salvation. These people seem earnest and sincere in their beliefs, many of them fanatically so. One does not want to

take chances with his soul. What is he to do?

At the opposite extreme stands another group of people who may also mislead the seeker if he is not very careful. They tell him that it does not matter what one believes so long as he is sincere about it. They say one may join any church he pleases and go blithely on, paying no attention to creeds and beliefs as they are of no importance.

But they are important. What one believes is most vital, for it determines what he will do and eventually become. The viewpoint of these people is entirely too careless an attitude to take toward so serious a matter. In Medicine, Surgery, Law, Engineering, or Business, people never say that it makes no difference what one thinks so long as he is sincere. They know it would not be true. Where property interests, justice, and health are concerned they will not take such long chances. They know these things are not to be trifled with. How is it then that anyone can assume that religion may be trifled with?

What then is the sincere seeker to do? He should do what any careful person does on any important matter - look the entire field over, analyze what he finds there, and come to a conclusion based on the total situation and not on any fragment or division of it. He should not let himself be swayed by the confused and conflicting shibboleths he hears, but he should seek truth and try to find enough of it to anchor his soul. From that point he can proceed with further investigation, experience, and discovery, for he will then have made only a start.

This is not a program for a temporary period, or even for a lifetime. It reaches up through the eternal years. Growing into the fulness of the divine pattern is the greatest and most challenging of all adventures, and is a task for the ages.

Religion is one of the primary interests of life, so we find it wherever we find people and all attempts to cut people off from it fail. It appears in crude form in the earliest known history of the race, and it is found evolving into more and more enlightened forms as the cultures of races grow. In the form of animism and nature worship we find it in what we think of as the race's childhood. We may assume that we would also find it from the beginning, coming up with man from the unrecorded ages of his life.

The fact that it has often taken priestly forms is not to be counted against it. It is natural for people to want a human representative of the divine power. If certain groups have tried to express their religious ideas in the form of images that is nothing against religion either. We are children, and the child mind tends to think in pictures. It was not unnatural for those of earlier times thus to try to visualize what they felt in their hearts. God finally answered this universal human need by giving the world a human picture of Himself in the person of our Great Companion, Jesus of Nazareth, and the concept of the Divine was always easier after that.

A time came when the old religious ideas began to take organized form, as an idea must do to be preserved. Then religion, like other fundamental interests of life, became institutionalized. The first religious establishments were based on the old mythologies.

They are not to be sneered at either. The myths of Egypt, Greece, ancient America, Rome, and other countries are more than fancies and idle tales. Their characters are personifications of forces found operating in life and the world, and they very cleverly symbolize human experience. If one examines them for their significance he finds them not false but true.

Most of the religions that have survived came out of the East. Asia is the cradle of world religions as well as of the world life. Buddha tried to find the right way and staked his all on the quest, reaching much the same conclusion as that taught by Jesus - self-renunciation. Mohammed communed with the silences and felt religion revealed to him in terms of the life and imagery of his part of the world. Hinduism is a sincere and not wholly unfruitful quest for the life and power of the spirit. The Persian and Chinese religions have at least given the world great bodies of wisdom. Judaism prepared the way for the coming of the Christ.

Every person interested in religion should read at least the cream of the sacred writings of all these faiths. He will find that their devotees were not evil people trying to promote error, but earnest and sincere men who recognized the promptings of the Divine Spirit and were trying as faithfully as any of us to find the truth and give it adequate expression. The religious spirit that has prompted the hearts of human beings in all ages and countries has been the same.

It was this spirit to which Jesus of Nazareth gave fuller expression. He said He had not come to destroy the teachings of the past, but to fulfill them. The faith He founded was not intended to displace whatever truth others had discovered before him or to discredit the testimony they had borne. It was to make possible the better realization of the human dream of a better life with the Divine as a guide.

If Christian missionaries to other lands would proceed on this basis, they would be more successful and would be able to lead more people into a larger light. Believers in other religions are seeking truth as earnestly as we and those who go to enlighten them. The Master would not disregard their experience and wisdom, but would build on it. One who takes an electric light to replace a tallow candle need not sneer at the candle. It was good as far as it went.

An interesting and important contribution to the religious thought of the ages has been made by the Mayans who have left the remains of an advanced science and religious understanding in parts of Mexico and Central America. Their religion even had the idea of a messiah in it, as did that of the Jews; and their belief that they had come from another part of the world suggests the possibility that the flame of their faith may have been first kindled from the same sources as our own. They are among the peoples who have taken their religion seriously, worked at it, and tried to realize from it as much as possible. That is what Christians must do with their religion before its full meaning and value are demonstrated.

So every religious group in every time and place has something to contribute to the world faith. Not one of these contributions is to be despised. They should be sympathetically appraised, appreciated for what they are, and the true and good in them appropriated by us all.

Religion might be likened to some brilliant star that has flown earthward and been broken by the impact into many pieces. The fragments, differing in size, shape, and appearance, have been picked up by many people in different times and places, each piece being considered by its finder the sum total of the treasure.

If these people would make a comparative examination they would find that the essence of what they have discovered is the same. Their pieces are not mutually exclusive. They fit together because they are broken and scattered fragments of the same thing. We do wrong both to them and to ourselves when we try to set them in opposition to each other. What is needed is to fit them together again in their original perfect and complete oneness.

Some would say that while this may be true of other religions it is not true of Christianity. It, they would say, is the one true and perfect religion and the only way is for it to displace all the rest. It would be much better to say that Christianity is the most adequate expression we know of the universal spirit of religion and that it may be expected gradually to absorb others as they find in it a fuller expression of what they seek.

Those who think Christianity must wage conquest and drive others out should listen again to the Master as he declares that he came not to destroy, but to fulfill. When all the other multiform fragments of human faith are put together the piece called Christianity will probably be found to be the heart of the completed result. Christianity is the message of the Man who respected all honest religious viewpoints, and tried to show people how to go on from where they were to something more complete. His message and the life he taught are not something to confuse people still more. They are the age-old human dream come true.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem the Magi did not antagonize his possible replacement of their ancient faith. Instead they journeyed far to visit his manger birthplace to do him honor and see what they could learn. They knew that old orders pass, and that if anything better appears one should have an open mind toward it. They were looking for the fulfillment of the possibilities their older religious viewpoints had suggested to their unprejudiced minds, the completion of what their religious understanding had partially attained. So they did not start a debate to defend a stand-pat viewpoint. They followed a star, trusting its single gleam to light them to a larger understanding of life and truth; and they were not disappointed in the quest.

The Christian faith, intended as a uniting bond for all earnest seekers after God, early began to break up into separate divisions itself. Earnest and sincere men differed in details of belief and did not feel that they could compromise minor differences and unite on broader principles. As a result we have a bewildering multiplicity of brands of Christianity, large and small, separated from each other by minor but violent differences, some of them contending savagely against others, and some insisting that they alone are right.

That was what confused Joseph Smith, and it confuses many earnest truth seekers still. This discussion is intended to help such ones to escape negative viewpoints, look and listen above the confusion and disputing, and find for themselves a satisfactory adjustment to the Kingdom of God and its organized life.

The first thing to do, if one has not already done it, is to put aside prejudice, free the mind from the shackles of old and restricted viewpoints, and approach the question with a free and open mind. A scientist approaches a problem in the laboratory presupposing nothing and willing to accept and act upon whatever he honestly finds to be true. That is the way to approach the matter of finding a right religious understanding. Failure to do so will only fling one back again into the old slavery to half truths and broken lights.

Now let us begin to gather up all this and weave it into a single thread for the sake of simplicity. It still looks a little difficult, but it really isn't. There is a very practical course to suggest. It is, like the old lady already mentioned, to have all kinds of religion - that is to do one's best to winnow out the error and accept the truth in all that the human race has thought out, tested, and arrived at religiously. Just disregard the labels entirely, and do as St. Paul said - prove all things and hold fast to that which is good.

"I believe that every person's religion is right - for him - at this time" said a thoughtful friend to the writer one day. That is a formula that will bear a great deal of thinking over. In fact, it is just about the answer to our question.

But how can so many different religious viewpoints all be right? They can all be right because they are not different religious viewpoints after all. They are just different STAGES at which individuals and groups have arrived in their religious thinking and living. The various stations along a railroad are not opposed to each other at all. They are different, to be sure, but they are all points on the way to the same destination. That is what different religions and religious viewpoints are - stations along the way to the unity of the faith, the full-grown man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

We may put it another way, and consider it under the figure of a school, for life certainly is that. In what school do you find every student in the same class, understanding everything in the same way? You find at least as many varieties of understanding as there are grades in the school. Some members are in the kindergarten, some in the primary class, some in the later grammar grades, some in high school, some in college, and some doing graduate work in the higher universities.

You do not find the fourth grade student discussing the binomial theorem because he has not come to it yet. On the other hand, you do not hear the college senior talking about division of decimals. What each understands and expresses is different from the rest because the point he has reached in his progress is different from the rest. The kindergarten lesson is right for the kindergarten child, but the exacting problem in advanced science is right for the graduate student. Neither lesson would do for the other. They are not opposed because they are different. They are just different stations on the way to the same place. Both are right - for the ones who are doing them - at this time.

The early member of the human race with his animism, and fetishes, and nature worship, may be likened to the kindergarten child with his play lessons. We pass the various grades and departments on the way up. Perhaps the average, present-day Christian would represent the high school or early college stage.

"Wait a minute", calls out some rugged defender of the faith. "We will not permit Christianity to be classified that way. It is right once and for all. It represents the graduate work in the university, and the top year at that."

Does it? Let us go to the garden on the Master's last night and hear him saying to his disciples the last things his earthly ministry was to include. Read the record over again in the Gospel of John. Among others you will find this, "I have yet many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." Even the Christian faith is an unfolding one, and we have not yet mastered all its revelation, or even received it.

One of the greatest troubles in religious thinking is just this tendency on the part of members of a given group to insist that it is one hundred percent right and that its viewpoint is the last word. Latest word would be better. The average religionist could well afford to trade some of his self-esteem for some of the humility his Lord had and taught others to have. He might then be able to be more tolerant of the viewpoints of others.

From this point on let us be quite personal and address the reader directly. You have studied the question of religion, and tried to find out the divine will and obey it. You have thus far honestly come to certain conclusions. That is the station you have reached on the way up. What you have worked out is right - for you - now - but don't insist that is right for anyone else or assume that it will be right for you tomorrow.

Should you take the attitude that your belief is the last word, and you are one hundred percent right, then there would be nothing more for you to learn. Such a viewpoint shuts off all further progress.

Such an attitude is never justified. There will be things yet to learn when you have been developing another million years. That is the wonder of the quest of truth - the glory of going on. Be grateful for your religious understanding. Cherish it. Cling to it. But always be trying to build on it, to go on from there, to extend your horizons, to get on to the next station.

What about the churches? Which should one join, or should he join any? Joining a church is no guarantee of rightness, and failing to join one is no proof of wrongness, but it is practical and sensible to belong to some organized religious group. It is a public witness of one's faith, and it is a means by which one can work more effectively through cooperation with others. What church, then? The one that seems best to meet your needs.

But hearken, never get the idea that your church or any church is the last word either. Any consecrated church is good, but it is not perfect and it is not final. Its membership has good people in it, but they are human. Its creed has some truth in it, but not all the truth. One can meet God at any altar if he tries, but your church too is only a station on the way.

Why do we have all these divisions? Simply because we have mastered so little of the truth. It is the mixture of truth and error that makes differences and debatings. Until it was established that two and two make four there were probably all kinds of arguments about it, but when the matter was finally settled that was the end of division. When truth is finally arrived at harmony takes the

place of discord. The way to harmony is more understanding of truth.

Today there are many evidences of the stirring of an impulse toward a universal faith. There seems to be a daily increase in the number of people who are little concerned with the husks of religion's formalities but who are deeply interested in its spirit and power. This faith may come through the churches, or over the heads of the churches, or in both ways. The important thing is that it shall come. It may bear one name or another. The important thing is that it be in the demonstration of the spirit and of power. If you understand this, it should help to make you a better church member and through you to make your church a greater force for good in the life of the world.

The Book of Revelation says something about the purpose of the Lord being to make a church that has no blemish of any kind - no spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. That is not any of the churches we know. It is the church God intends making of all the churches as they move forward and blend together in a universal faith.

Now prepare for what may be a shock, though it does not seem that anything in the teachings of the New Testament should be shocking. Take your Bible and read the last two chapters of it - Revelation, Chapters 21 and 22. Note that this is not a description of heaven after death, but of a new world order, - a heavenly city coming down from God out of heaven, a sway of God established among men.

Many wonderful things are said about this ideal condition that is coming, but probably the meaning of all of them is gathered up in the single statement that God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. That is, people will have learned so well how to live under God that there will no longer be anything to cry about.

Toward the end of Chapter 21 you will come upon this amazing statement: "And I saw no temple therein." Then the record goes on to explain, "for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof."

At this stage the church has finished its work and disappeared. Our little partial understandings will have grown and merged into the fuller religious consciousness. Religion will have come into its own, with every place a sanctuary, every thought an adoration, and every act a service. We shall have grown up at last.



As Moo Lu Akin used to say to his Chela, Religion is not a decoration to be put on or off; it is thread inseparably woven into the fabric of life itself.

I pray the Great Spirit's blessings will come upon you mentally, spiritually, in your body and in your soul.

Amen.

Your Class Instructor, and
The Mayans